

Ambassador Reeker - Video Message

World Press Freedom Day

Hello. Twenty years ago, on May 3, 1991, “The Windhoek Declaration on Promoting Independent and Pluralistic Media” made a bold call for all Countries to affirm their commitments to guarantee and promote freedom of the press. The spirit of that Declaration led to the UN General Assembly’s establishment of World Press Freedom Day with a global emphasis on the importance of an independent press for the development and preservation of democracy and economic prosperity.

This year’s World Press Freedom theme is, “21st Century Media: New Frontiers, New Barriers”. It focuses on the potential of the Internet, as well as more established forms of journalism, to promote freedom of expression, democratic governance, and sustainable development. The digital revolution has reshaped the media landscape and made today’s press something we could not have imagined in 1991.

That digital reality is certainly clear here in Macedonia. This country of 2 million people boasts more than 800,000 Facebook profiles. Every major news outlet has an online service, and increasingly people more information from the internet, than from print. But access to a greater volume of information does not make it more accurate, useful, or benign. So, in this environment, an independent media still plays an increasingly critical role.

The media landscape might have changed, but the role of journalists and the news has not. The role of a strong and independent media is absolutely critical to the success of a healthy civil society – and it is the responsibility of every journalist to protect the rights of a free press. But it is also the responsibility of every citizen, both here in Macedonia and around the world, to demand independence and integrity from journalists. So join me today in reaffirming that call from Windhoek, to guarantee a free press. You deserve no less. Thank you.